



The  
Seafarers  
Happiness  
Index

# Seafarers Happiness Index

Quarter 2 2022



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# Seafarers Happiness Index

## Quarter 2

The Seafarers Happiness Index (SHI) is the shipping industry's ongoing barometer of the key issues facing those at sea today. Seafarers are asked 10 key questions every Quarter, sharing their views about specific issues affecting their life and work.

Seafarers continue to work with dedication, professionalism, care and resolve. Over the past couple of years, they have faced challenges like never before. A pandemic and the effects of war have impacted hard on an already difficult profession. We hope that by listening to their views and by developing data to support decision-making and responses, we can facilitate the changes to make better for seafarers.

We have heard from crews all over the world and we want to thank every single one of them for their efforts and sacrifices in keeping trade flowing in these most difficult circumstances. We are hugely grateful for the time and effort taken to share their experiences.

In addition to the survey, the Mission to Seafarers' network of seafarer centres and social channels have afforded access and interactions with thousands of seafarers. This generates vital data and provides an incredibly powerful and important insight into key issues for seafarers today. We realise that there is a lot of demand on seafarers and we value every response.

This report not only highlights the findings of the Quarter 2 survey but also gives insight into some of the initiatives and developments having a positive impact at sea. This is demonstrated by a marked increase in happiness levels since Quarter 1.



**Even after COVID restrictions are lifted and seafarers are fully vaccinated, we are not able to go on shore leave. The companies, port agents and authorities find a reason to refuse shore leave. //**

## Q2 2022 – A New Hope

### Rising Happiness Levels

This quarter has revealed a welcome rise in optimism with a significant increase in the overall rating of 7.21/10, up from 5.85 in the previous quarter.

Whilst what we are seeing might not be the end of COVID issues, it is perhaps the beginning of the end. People are moving more freely and there is a positive focus within the industry on finding solutions to many of the frustrations which have been aggravating seafarers for many years.

Amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), and the prospect of universal connectivity, has given rise to optimism and timely crew changes have had a massive impact on positivity. When seafarers know how long they will be on board and that they will be home on time, they can deal with the challenges faced at sea with a far better resolve and disposition. A rising tide in solutions has finally begun to lift morale and the mindset on board.

However, whilst the data does suggest that we are seeing improvements, there is no room for complacency. We are still hearing negatives; seafarers continue to share many experiences which are at times frustrating, and at others hugely detrimental to mental health.

This Quarter 2 2022 report paints a picture of some important positive progress and will allow the industry a collective wiping of the brow but it is not mission accomplished and there is still much to be done.

# We can make a difference

The rising seafarers' happiness data shows that we can make a difference. The life and experiences of those at sea can be improved by changes in legislation and law, and from the initiatives which companies, charities and welfare organisations create.

Whilst COVID and conflict have been enough to derail many industries, being so close to the problems has occasionally made life at sea untenable for seafarers. Where there is war they can become trapped, attacked, and witness conflict first-hand; when there is a pandemic and disease, they are vilified, unwanted and trapped on their ships; when things go wrong on a global scale, it is often the poor seafarer caught in the crosshairs.

This has been the reality of past research; data trending downwards, and morale dropping even faster. Time and again, we hear of a "broken" profession and stories of people facing insurmountable problems. Thankfully, this latest report does show some cause for cheer – an opportunity to reflect on the improvements that have led to a far better mood out at sea.

## Making Improvements

Just as in the past, progress was made when companies did all they could to support their seafarers, so this quarter we are hearing about a returned focus on welfare and wellbeing. Investments are being made to ensure life is made as enjoyable, comfortable and engaging as it can be. We are seeing more companies acting positively, and governments and the international community are beginning to bring about positive change.

We have also seen an improvement in mood because the most fundamental aspect of seafaring appears to be more certain - knowing when you are going home. There can be no doubt, the best day for a seafarer is pay-off day! The excitement, the change of clothes, the sense of achievement are constant drivers for seafarers. The first thing many do when they arrive on a vessel is to mark the calendar with the date that they are due to disembark! Even for the most resilient of seafarers,

not knowing when they were paying off or seeing their families again has taken its toll.

The data from Quarter 2 reflects that the industry is getting better at making crew changes more regularly, with 41% of seafarers on board for between just 1 and 3 months - an improvement borne out in The Neptune Declaration Crew Change Indicator (CCI) data.

The sense from seafarers is one of utter relief that they can expect to be relieved on, or close to, their time.

//

**Not knowing when I was going home was like running a race without end. I was exhausted. //**

The CCI provides up-to-date information on the crew change situation, detailing the percentage of seafarers who are on board beyond the expiry of their initial contracts, the percentage of seafarers who have been on board over 11 months, and the percentage of seafarers who have been vaccinated.

The CCI data gathered during the same period as Quarter 2 shows that the number of seafarers on board vessels beyond the expiry of their contract has decreased, and there is far greater stability in the data. Another positive is the number of vaccinated seafarers from the sample has risen from 86.2% in June to 89.3% in July.

Seafarer vaccination rates are now higher, or at the same level as, the population fully vaccinated against COVID in many large shipping nations in Europe, North America and Asia. This appears to reduce the fear of exclusion and lowers the risk of seafarers being seen as a problem due to being unvaccinated. This is especially important

for seafarers from the Philippines, as entry back home and an ability to travel internally have been prefaced on being vaccinated.

Contributing CCI ship managers highlighted the key developments that have impacted crew changes in the past months, and report an overall stabilisation of the situation, with an easing of restrictions, flight cancellations and lockdowns.

Although challenges remain due to restrictions in some Asian countries, China has loosened quarantine requirements for Chinese seafarers. Significantly, restrictions have also been lifted in Singapore, and the Philippines and India have also lifted a range of travel bans and COVID measures - all of which means that seafarers have a far greater chance of getting back home unhindered. This lifts the mood dramatically and understandably so.

### A delicate recovery

So, while it is good to see progress, we do need to keep a collective industry eye on the COVID data and whether we may see a global spike in the months ahead. This would have a potentially crippling effect on travel once again, and seafarers are most vulnerable to snap changes in restrictions.

While COVID and travel are macro issues, when it has come to the micro improvements experienced by seafarers, we have been receiving good news too - more companies are dedicating funds and management support for wellbeing.

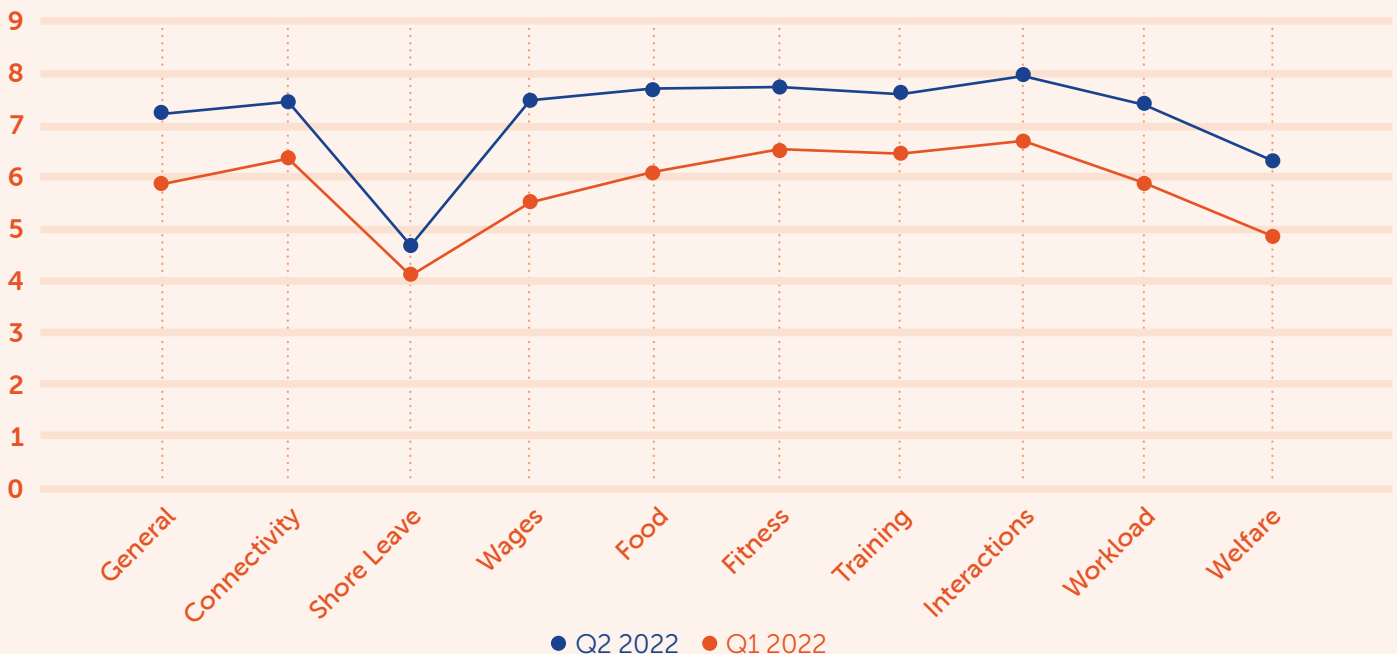
As industry good practice evolves and improves, we hear reports of a far more holistic and management-centric view of wellness, tackling mental health issues and clamping down on problems such as harassment, bullying and victimisation.

For the past few years a range of charities, welfare organisations and industry bodies have been working hard to ensure that wellbeing is at the forefront of thinking and this positive energy, effort and spending is now coming to its own. The concepts of seafarer wellbeing, happiness, enjoyment, and satisfaction are simple to understand, but often difficult to deliver. Even without a pandemic or war, it is hard to translate a willingness to make life better into a happier reality. However, various initiatives are now combining to give us new hope.

With increased social interaction, investment and managerial support, it is possible to see the difference on vessels that are determined to ensure that quality of life is a genuine focus.

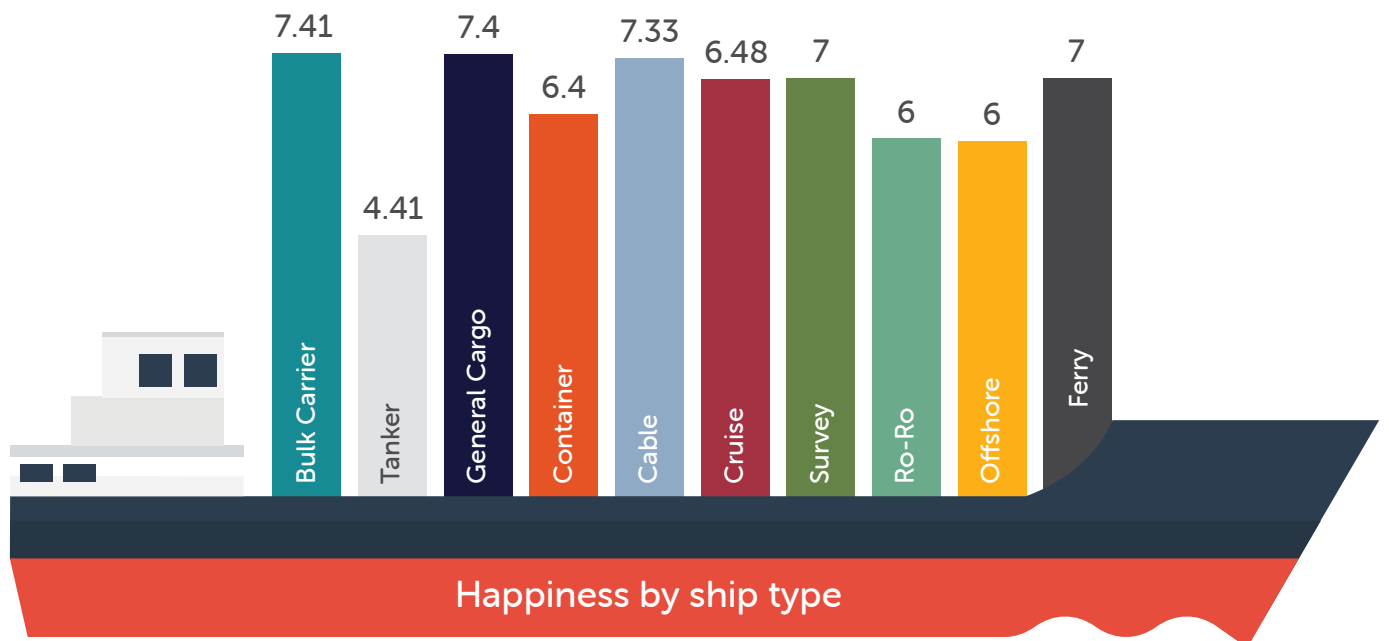
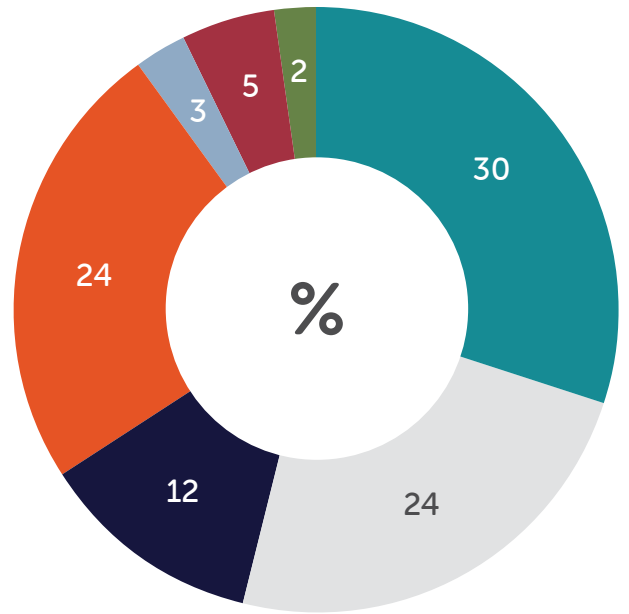
There is much to be learned from those who care, and who invest to translate that into making seafarers' lives and experiences better, and by listening we can empathise and understand the impact of the things we can do. We can, as an industry, learn from the positives and understand what the best companies are doing to make life better, to raise smiles and spirits, and we can encourage all to try and find their path to seafarers' happiness. With this rise in sentiment data, perhaps finally we are learning lessons, instilling the importance of happiness at sea.

Q2 and Q1 Comparison 2022



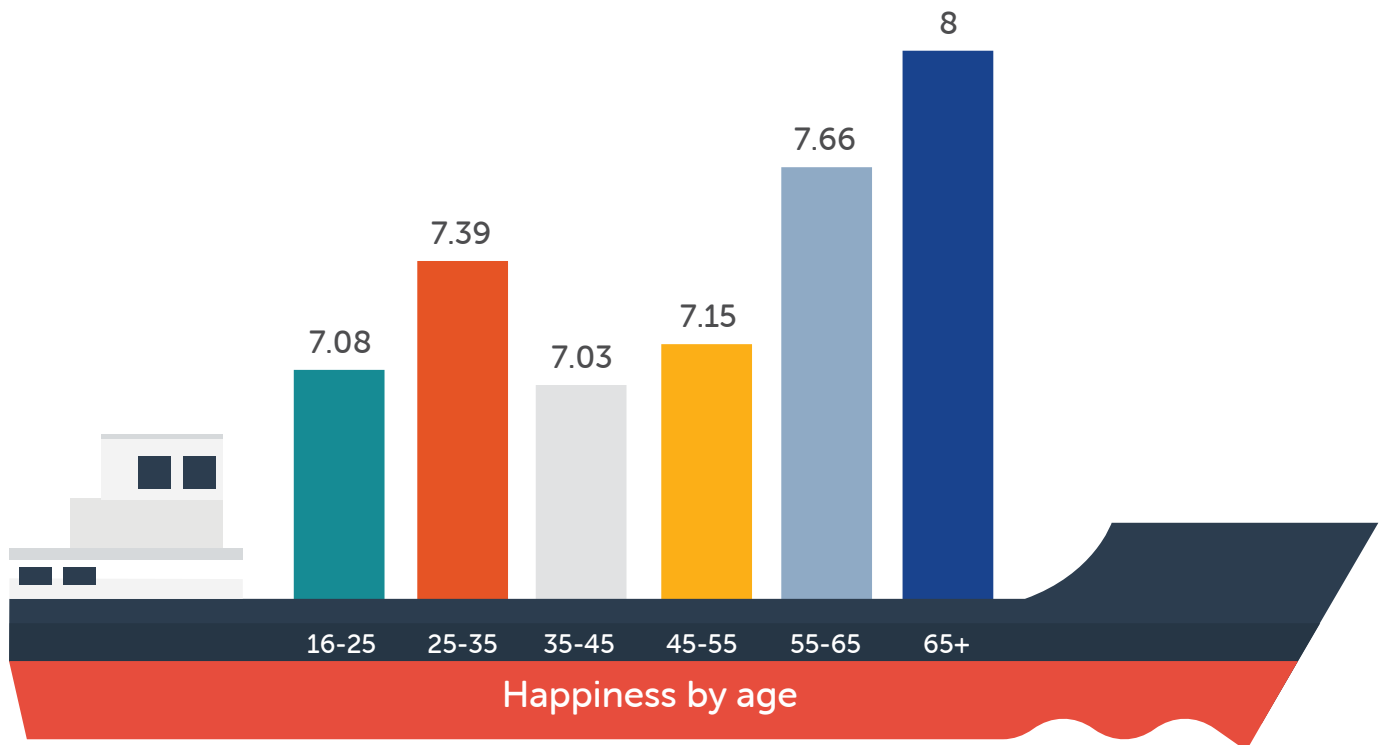
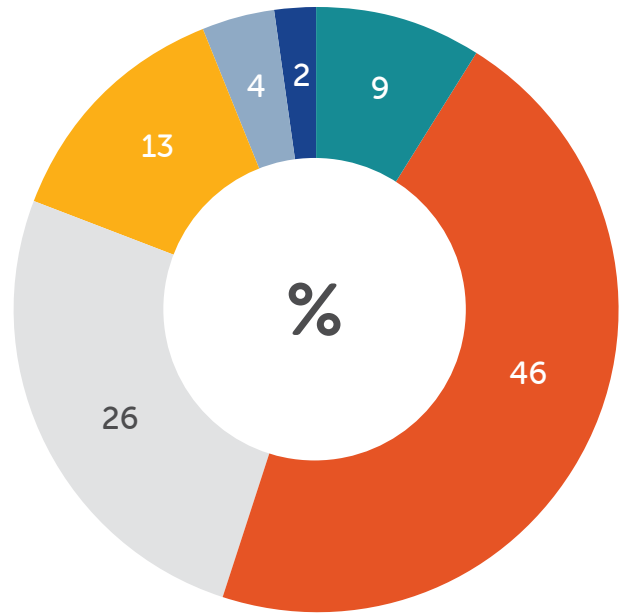
# Ship Type

- Bulk Carrier
- Tanker
- General Cargo
- Container
- Cable
- Cruise
- Others



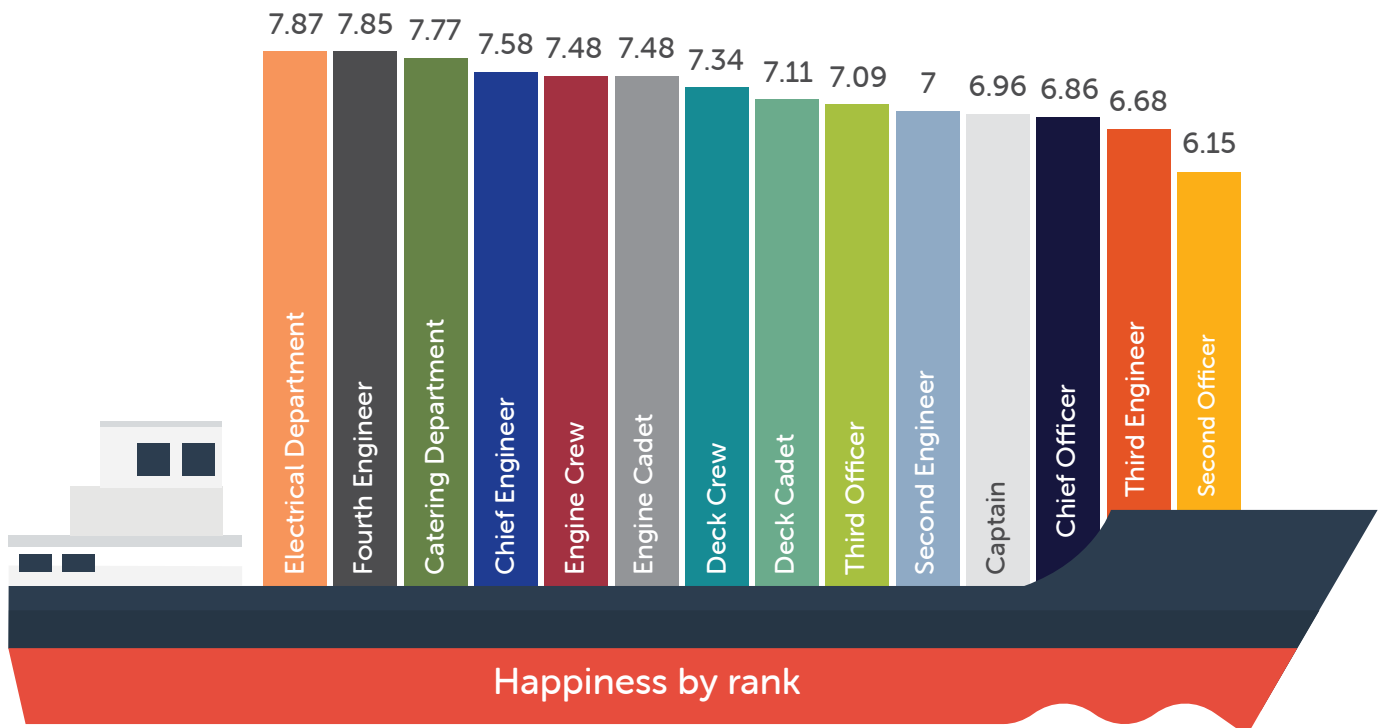
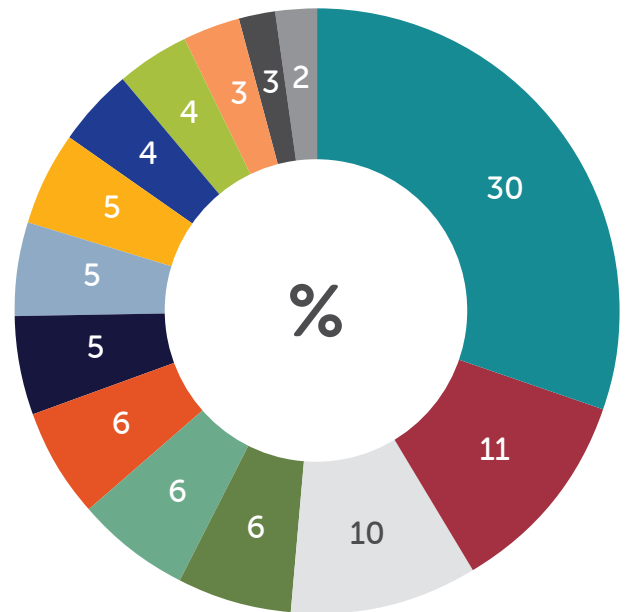
# Age Range

- 16-25
- 25-35
- 35-45
- 45-55
- 55-65
- 65+



# Ranks

- Deck Crew
- Engine Crew
- Captain
- Catering Department
- Deck Cadet
- Third Engineer
- Chief Officer
- Second Engineer
- Second Officer
- Chief Engineer
- Third Officer
- Electrical Department
- Fourth Engineer
- Engine Cadet

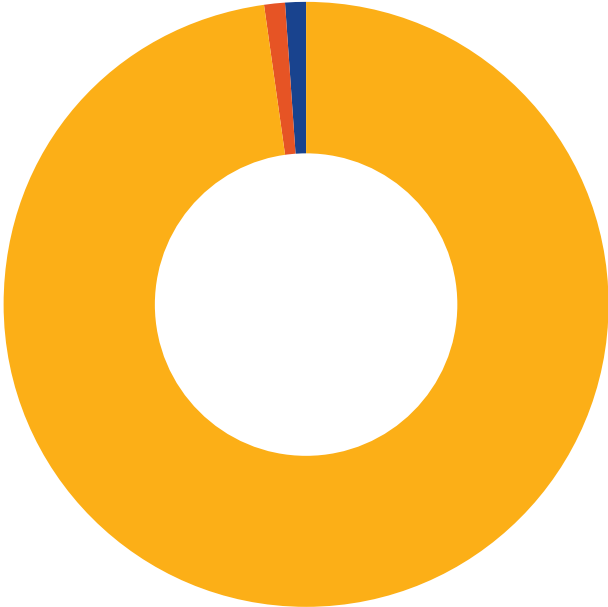




# Gender

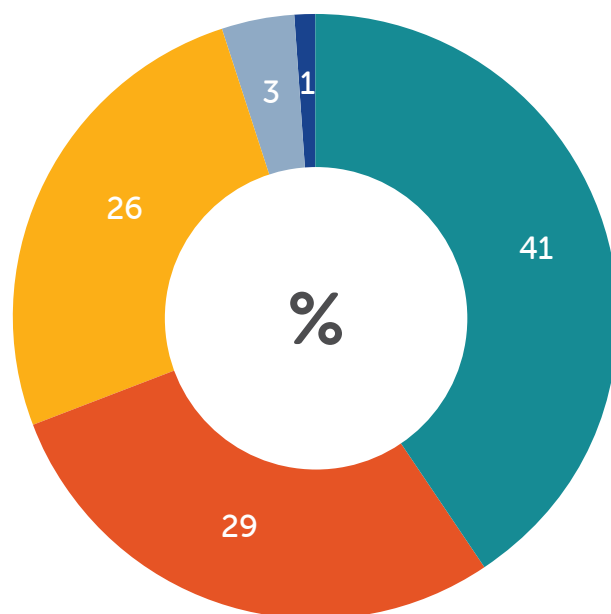
- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Non-male respondents were reportedly happier at **8/10**, while the vast majority of respondents were at **7.21/10**.



# Trip Length

- 1-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6-9 months
- 9-12 months
- Over 12 months



# Q2 2022 Responses

## Positive progress, but problems remain

While the seafarers' happiness data has risen over the past quarter, and with talk of positive measures making a real difference to life at sea, there are many issues which persist.

While we did see occasional recoveries in 2021, overall the direction of travel was downward. Happiness was eroded but is now showing signs of recovery. Though enthusiasm should be tempered with the view that if new COVID spikes stymie progress, or if other problems such as monkeypox raise their problematic heads, then this recovery will likely be very short-lived indeed.

Now though, we should be able to recognise progress, to shout about the good things which have happened and celebrate them. It has taken time, effort, investment and a will to challenge and overcome. There is a sense that the industry has risen to the cause and we are seeing action, not just talk, about improving life for seafarers.

This latest data shows there are burgeoning signs of better things ahead. However, optimism should be tempered by how delicate any recovery is. These gains can so easily be lost and, as the responses from seafarers show us, we should not and cannot rest on our laurels for a moment.

The Seafarers Happiness Index is a barometer of sentiment, a means of delivering intersubjectivity to a complex and ultimately very individual concept and context. That sees us quick to cheer or bemoan the big picture, but of course, each seafarer is the sum of their own experiences. Even with an overall rise in the data, some are still going through tough times.

There is still much to be done, and despite data-driven positivity, seafarers still speak to us about their concerns and the problems they face. We cannot overlook, ignore or gloss over these just for ease of narrative. Far from it. The extended feedback, whether good, bad or ugly is the actual power underpinning our data.

It is to that caveat, that we have to explore the existing and real barriers that all too many seafarers experience in their time at sea. In the written seafarer responses, we tend to hear from those who are most likely to be angered or frustrated. Indeed, often the narratives do not always reflect the overarching data. However, these insights give a wonderful opportunity to better understand what is happening on board. A chance to perhaps see the problems that may be coming over the horizon in the months ahead.

1. **How happy generally when at sea?** 7.27 up from 5.92
2. **How happy about contact with family when at sea?** 7.44 up from 6.39
3. **How happy about access to shore leave?** 4.8 up from 4.14
4. **How happy about wages/salary?** 7.49 up from 5.59
5. **How happy about the food on board?** 7.81 up from 6.05
6. **How happy about your ability to keep fit and healthy on board?** 7.84 up from 6.45
7. **How happy about the training you receive?** 7.79 up from 6.3
8. **How happy about interaction with other crew on board?** 8.07 up from 6.82
9. **How happy with your workload?** 7.4 up from 5.92
10. **How happy with welfare facilities when you are ashore?** 6.2 up from 4.92

## How happy generally when at sea?

7.27 ↑ from 5.92

General levels of happiness have jumped, and as explained in the introduction, there are some key macro factors which have helped the boost.

Seafarers told us of their relief that freedom of movement is returning, that vaccination levels have rocketed amongst crews, and there is a sense of stability returning to the industry.

Certainty and trust are the bedrock of what it is to leave home, to travel the world and work as hard as seafarers do. There needs to be more than just hope about getting paid and ultimately getting back home when your time is done. That is perhaps why COVID hit so hard on the psyche of seafarers. They lost any semblance of certainty, trust was eroded and hope evaporated.

Despite the overall positive tenor of the report, there are still seafarers facing problems, issues and concerns. They shared them with us, and it is clear there is still much to be done to ensure a sustained recovery in happiness at sea, and indeed to ensure that seafarers feel a sense of optimism about their role and futures.

Illustrative of the issues still to be dealt with, one respondent wrote, "There is nothing left about this career but the money to feed our family. We are treated like slaves by our own offices, anyone can just come on board in port and treat you like a number. The work and rest hours are just filled up in the paper for the happiness of our companies, if you want to be honest and fill it right, you will not get a ship next time because you are accused of managing your time badly". Adding, "The internet is very weak and vulgarly expensive, basically we are being robbed for connectivity".

The problems are still there, and we hope that while speaking in positive terms of wider improvements, we can also share with the industry the views of those who are struggling, who feel lost, frustrated and in need of help.

We did also hear from Ukrainian seafarers who were increasingly concerned about reaching the end of their contracts on board. They felt that they had no option but to extend as they either had nowhere to go, or their families were now in countries that would not grant them a visa, or if they returned to Ukraine they would not be allowed to leave and would be conscripted into the army. It is clear that Ukrainian seafarers are suffering badly, they are far from home, isolated and disconnected from their families, and dealing with the aftermath of destruction, albeit at a great distance.



**Leaving my family behind ashore and knowing that I will stay for quite a while at sea makes me feel sad.**

## How happy about contact with family when at sea?

7.44 ↑ from 6.39

The issue of connectivity and contact with families and loved ones at home was the topic of much debate within our most recent responses. As such this debate continues to shape the happiness of seafarers massively. There were responses warily welcoming the changes to MLC which will make access mandatory. However, the enthusiasm was tempered with concerns about cost and quality.

A response which seemed to sum up the wait-and-see tone stated, "Having mandatory access is just a word, it is about how much I have to pay and how good the WiFi is. Any company can say it is available immediately, just flick a switch. Whether it makes a difference we will see".

Having prefaced the response with caution, many see this as progress. In the past, the issue of connectivity has been paramount and has been a definite dividing line between happier seafarers and those who are frustrated and disaffected.

It is to be hoped that universal access will at least open the door to those seafarers who have been denied such links to home for too long. Overall, the jump in sentiment has been driven by the MLC changes and a sense of some progress. Though the satisfaction levels would have been far higher had legislators pushed companies harder to apply cost limits and higher data standards. It is a start though, and seafarers broadly welcomed the news.

## How happy about access to shore leave?

4.8 ↑ from 4.14

While the data for shoreleave did indeed show a modest increase, the fact that it is still so comparatively low does indeed reflect the sorry state of affairs as seafarers see things.

Yes, there is a modest degree of change. Some seafarers said they felt access to shoreleave was "more likely now" – though whether they decided to bother going ashore or not was a rather different discussion. "I can go, but I feel too tired and it costs too much", said one respondent.

The rise in vaccinations, the opening of borders, and in some countries a far less COVID-paralysed mindset, meant the issue of shoreleave is at least worthy of discussion once more.

For those that do get ashore, they are just so grateful for a break from the shipboard norm. To take a stroll; maybe do some shopping; even things that those ashore may not understand, such as taking in a bit of nature and seeing some grass, were a cause for celebration.

Escaping the noisy, constantly moving, fuel-scented, steel box and all its attendant work demands is a valuable tool in the armoury against fatigue, depression and poor mental health. However, just as we have heard so many times before, respondents stated "no shoreleave", "port restrictions", "no access", and variations of a very familiar theme.

We also received worrying reports that in some places port agents were stating there were shoreleave bans when that is not the case. "Agent told us there was a ban on going ashore. We checked with port authority, and no such rule had been made. The agent just wanted an easier life". This is a concern, and companies would be encouraged to keep an up-to-date guide to ports where their seafarers can enjoy a break from the vessel.

It is to be hoped that if nations continue to open up, then the chance to unwind and release work pressures will increase. It is important, and we should encourage the take up of shoreleave for all.

## How happy about wages/salary?

7.49 ↑ from 5.59

The issue of wages/salaries was unexpectedly higher this quarter. Given the talk of the cost of living crises in many nations, the rises in inflation and reports in the past of stagnating wage levels, this was not something we would naturally have expected to see.

However, perhaps this is reflective of the wider positive mood. When everything else feels ok, then maybe the issue of wages feels ok too. If you are feeling good, you can go home, go ashore and enjoy life a little more; suddenly the pressure and negative view of wages take on a different perspective.

There were of course many comments from those who feel that they should be earning more. A common theme is that “we work too hard, and our pay is always too little”. However, overall the sentiment was positive and the mood surprisingly buoyant.

During the reporting period, it was announced that the minimum monthly basic wage for able seafarers is to be raised, following a resolution agreed by a subcommittee of the Joint Maritime Commission (JMC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The more positive mood is perhaps reflective of this, but as one respondent said, “there is always room for improvement”.

Where there was dissatisfaction, it was not so much about what seafarers got, but instead, the focus was on the disparity with those ashore. One response stated, “For senior officers on tankers is decent to live a good life at home, but in comparison to what it takes for this amount of money and the amount of money that the charterers brokers and owners make with us the salaries are bad, especially that in our days there are many jobs ashore where you can get the same amount while you don’t have to put your life at risk and imprison yourself on a piece of steel for 6 months being the slave of the office”.

While another commented, “The industry is falling behind shore-based jobs. Fewer people and more work, quick port calls and then as soon as possible away again to next cargo”.



**The industry is falling behind shore-based jobs. Fewer people and more work, quick port calls and then as soon as possible away again to next cargo.**

## How happy about the food on board?

7.81 ↑ from 6.05

Again, another significant jump in this quarter, and a suggestion that easing of COVID restrictions in key ports has either made it easier to acquire better quality provisions, or that seafarers have been feeling more positive and this has reduced the focus on food.

Food and meals on board any vessel are a natural focal point around which the working day is based. In bad times this means that there is great importance placed not only on the food itself but also on the whole dining experience, thankfully when everything else appears to feel better then there is less emphasis and need to focus on dining.

Despite the rise in happiness levels regarding food, there were still some concerns voiced. One was about rising costs, the other the lack of input that most seafarers feel. "You can have a good chief cook but the quality of food is garbage. We do not have control over what we get when we order and on top of that it adds to the company trying to reduce costs. We eat the garbage that is not sold ashore to people".

There was also praise for the ship visitors who on occasion will bring takeaway food for the crew to enjoy as a change. This is extremely well received, and while eating burgers or pizza is perhaps not great from a dietary perspective, it does seem to give a massive boost to the morale on board. As illustrated in one comment, "We asked the Seafarers Center if they could bring us some chicken. They did, buckets of it. We had a great laugh on board eating it. Thank you".



**The quality of food is really important, and a good cook as well.**

## How happy about your ability to keep fit and healthy on board?

7.84 ↑ from 6.45

The significant rise in rating regarding exercise and fitness suggests that seafarers are feeling more positive about being able to go ashore more often, and that even a short walk on dry land can prove beneficial.

In regard to facilities on board, there is a frustration that heavy workload and tiredness make it difficult to use the provisions they have. Seafarers on vessels with missing or poor equipment are desperate to receive more.

While there is an industry concern surrounding the social cohesion on board, it should be remembered that sports activities do have a strong galvanising effect. One commented, "When we are in ballast voyages, there is excitement on board. We turn the holds into cricket and badminton areas. These trips seem to go so much faster".

Having a focus on fitness and enjoyment can bring a much-needed boost to individuals, and also the crew collectively. It is also important to ensure that time is given over to activities. If this is done, then it becomes an active management decision to promote the physical and mental well-being of the crew. There would have to be concerns where company rhetoric on health and fitness does not match the actual set-up on board.

You have probably heard the expression "greenwashing" – where a company or industry gives the false impression that what they do is more environmentally sound than it actually is.

We are seeing the signs of a similar attempt to accentuate positives at the expense of reality when it comes to the wellbeing of crews. "Grin washing" is a term we have coined in this report for companies who place entertainment equipment, good quality gyms, etc. on board to create the appearance of a healthy, happy workplace. However, there is no opportunity for seafarers to actually use them.

A comment we received stated, "Some ships have a gym, but you work 12-14 hours a day and you keep watch let's say 0400-0800 1600-2000 every single day without exception for 4-6 months", which does rather beg the question of when there is meant to be time to enjoy any form of non-work based activity?



**There's no time for gym or playing basketball because of the work load.**



## How happy about the training you receive?

7.79 ↑ from 6.3

With confidence and certainty beginning to return to the seafaring community, it is hoped that the rise in satisfaction would also relate to a willingness and eagerness to progress through the ranks.

Whilst there are signs of improvement, with many respondents saying they are pleased with the courses and the dedication of senior officers who help to train them, the complete picture is less than conclusive.

As one respondent stated, “20% is beneficial and the rest is garbage, a lot of training and people creating training tools and quizzes, etc. It’s just done for the sake of the industry and creating work ashore and for the happiness of insurers and brokers. In reality, we do not require that much kind of sitting in front of a PC or training while we carry on our very job on board. Seafarers are busy with their work, they work very hard and they do not have time for rest, who wants to lose 2 hrs in front of a computer course when they have only 7 total hrs of rest before going back to work?”

Similar to the issue surrounding wellbeing and exercise, if there is no time built into the schedule for training, then one would have to question how and when it is meant to be done. Seafarers feel stretched with not enough time to get all they need to be done, and the impact of more and more training piled onto this is a cause for concern.

## How happy about interaction with other crew on board?

8.07 ↑ from 6.82

While it is excellent to see such a high response to this question, there are still some issues which seafarers reported. Rather surprisingly, we received responses about alcohol on board.

Despite the positive responses, there were comments such as “Most seafarers remain isolated. No parties on board, no get-togethers and no incentives. No alcohol and all enjoyment killed by company policies”.

The debate around dry ships is one that many would consider closed a few years ago as so many companies and vessels have moved away from ship’s bars and on board alcohol consumption.

While it seems likely the alcohol on board debate has been settled some time ago, there does appear some work to be done to ensure that time and space for recreation and engagement are revisited. If there is nowhere to go, and no reason to do so, then it seems obvious that the focus comes back onto people simply closing their cabin doors and watching movies or video games alone. This is a downward slope for an ever-lessening chance of social interaction.

We heard from respondents who felt that having better controls and sensible drinking policies would make for a better atmosphere on board. It is difficult to envisage a return to drinking on board. Perhaps now though, with the increasing advent of far more palatable low or non-alcoholic beer and wine options, there is a scope to re-evaluate the use of spaces on board?

## How happy with your workload?

7.4 ↑ from 5.92

From the responses received it appears that much of the COVID-related workload and documentation has either been effectively automated or has become to be part of the new normal experienced at sea.

The positive responses said that a range of new systems and means of accessing and recording data had begun to ease the burden. There were also reviews of issues such as hygiene, and so requirements for the likes of repeated washing of working clothes were also being removed or better managed. Some vessels had even placed more catering department staff on board to assist and support the hygiene rules and requirements they were demanding.

While that is a positive response, it is far from the norm and we have once more heard from many seafarers who felt that the current system, the rules, regulations and means of recording data were all wrong.

As an illustration of the daily concerns about workload, one respondent laid out their day as a Chief Officer on a tanker, who is also a watchkeeper. "Watchkeeping 0400-0800, then over time until noon. Then you have a meeting with other seniors at 1500, then 1600 you go again on watch until 2000 hrs. Do the math. You sleep at noon 1-1.5 hrs nap after you were awake from 3 AM until 12/noon. If you want to have a chat with your family after you Watch in the evening and you go to bed at 21:30-22:00. Go figure how much you sleep until 03:30 when you wake up because you are watchkeeping from 0400".

While another starkly laid out their view. "I do not know any seafarer that is not speaking about quitting sailing... and the young people have better opportunities ashore, people are not interested in going to work at sea anymore." So while it is heartening to see the data picking up, we should not be ignoring the concerns that will still be likely ticking away in the minds of many at sea.

The issue of rest, sleep, quality time and a chance to move beyond relentless, repetitive demands are the requirements which will make seafaring attractive and will impact the recruitment and retention that we need.



**Fewer people to do the same amount of work, need a change in crewing regulations.**

## How happy with welfare facilities when you are ashore?

6.2 ↑ from 4.92

The issue of access to welfare facilities has been a question that has scored very poorly in the last year. This has been because of both a lack of shoreleave, but also the fact that many centres were forced to close due to COVID.

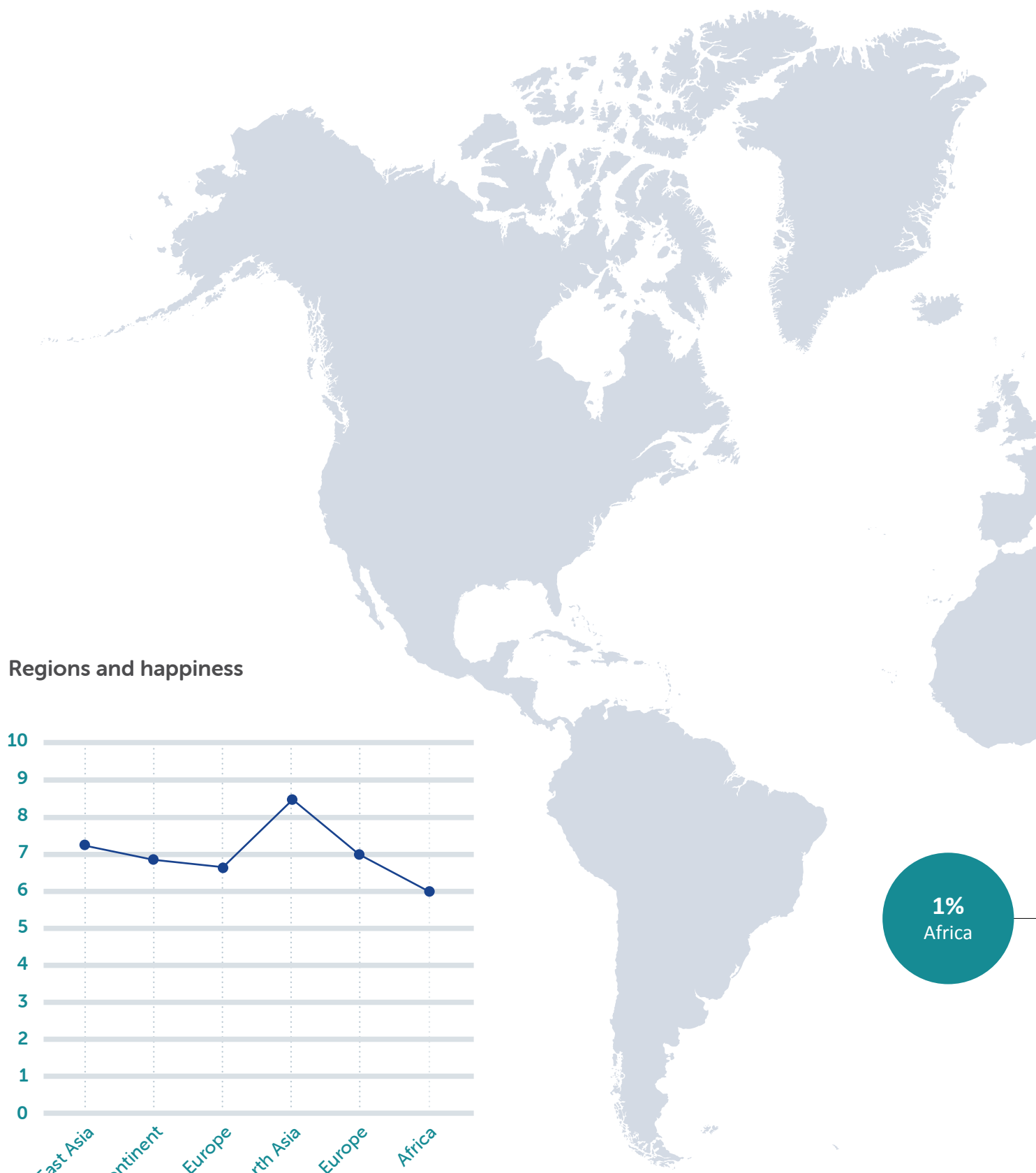
The result was that seafarers were simply often unable to gain access to some of the provisions ashore that they wanted. While ship visitors have done an incredible job of getting the likes of phonecards, washing gear, or other sundry items on board, there has been a sense of dislocation from seafarers.

Thankfully, we are now seeing that the doors are open once more, and increasingly seafarers are returning to to centres. It is to be hoped that in coming reports we will hear even more stories of the positive experiences that they have when visiting facilities.

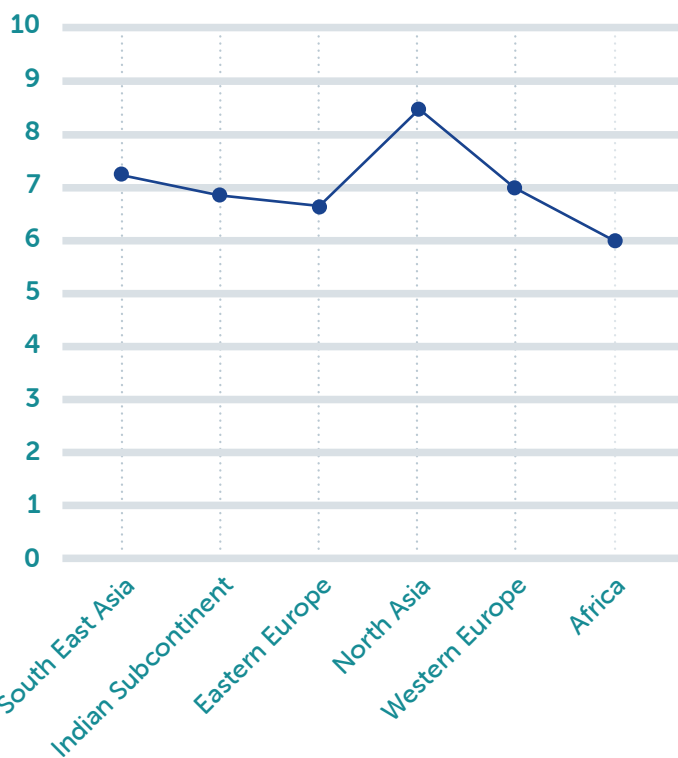


**It's difficult to reply on this topic as there no shore leave at all.**

# Where



Regions and happiness



1%  
Africa



# Conclusion

**This latest Seafarers Happiness Index data reveals a rise in optimism, with an overall average of 7.21/10, up significantly from 5.85 in the previous Quarter.**

This Quarter 2 2022 report paints a picture of important positive progress and perhaps should allow the industry a collective wiping of the brow as we have stemmed the constantly dropping tide of sentiment.

We see not perhaps the end of COVID issues, but perhaps the beginning of the end. The easing of crew changes is lifting morale and the mood on board. People seem to be moving more freely, and this has had a massively beneficial effect on seafarer sentiment.

There has also been a focus within the industry on finding solutions to many of the frustrations which have been dogging seafarers for years. Some of these initiatives appear to now be delivering. With more vaccinations, better travel, wage rises and new amendments to the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) delivering hopes of universal maritime connectivity, there is cautious optimism. Nonetheless, while the data does suggest improvements, there should be no complacency.

Indeed, optimism should be tempered by how delicate any recovery is. These gains can so easily be lost if we once more see crew change issues. As such, we should not and cannot rest on our laurels for a moment. There is still much to be done, and amongst the data-driven positivity seafarers still spoke to us about their concerns and the problems they faced.

We cannot think it is mission accomplished, though there is a sense of relief to finally hear positives. There are still many issues that can be improved, and so many opportunities to make further changes. We cannot ignore the negatives and we cannot ignore the creeping concerns about “grin washing”, where crews have facilities on board but the reality is of too little time to take advantage. Too few people and too much to do mean that these benefits are left idle and unused while seafarers work themselves to a drop.

We are grateful to seafarers for sharing their experiences, and it is vital that we build on these knowledge they share to deliver continued improvements. So even when there are positives, which we should celebrate, but cannot be blinded to the other fixes which are needed. There are still frustrations at sea and so many issues which can be detrimental to mental health on board vessels.



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